

NSC BRIEFING

23 December 1953

IMPLICATIONS OF FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION

A. Backbround

1. Sharp division of economic interests determines political following of most French parties.
2. Since the war, general political trend has been to the right, but party platforms still focus on appealing to the left -- in an unsuccessful attempt to win the 25% of French electorate which votes Communist.
3. Center submerged in basic conflict between right and left.
4. Since last summer Guy Mollet, Secretary General of Socialists, has been dicker-
ing with leaders of three center parties -- the Popular Republicans, the Resistance Union and the Radical Socialists
-- in attempt to form a

SECRET

"Social and Democratic Front."

- a. Mollet seems aiming at new elections which he hopes would permit a left-center coalition. No known results.

B. Election Impasse

1. Division within Radical Socialist party generally held responsible for election deadlock. Younger group desires to avoid rightist label and to orient party toward coalition envisaged by Mollet.
2. Scattering of anti-Laniel votes from other center and right parties was probably sufficient to make Radical Socialist split decisive.
3. Laniel's obstinacy reflected belief that, as in June cabinet crisis, center would give way.
4. EDC not a direct issue.

SECRET

SECRET

- a. entered into early party maneuvering but
- b. pro-EDC Socialists voted for their party colleague Naegelen -- on basis of pre-election agreement that EDC not involved.

SECRET

SECRET

C. Political Outlook -- Internal

1. Formation of a minority cabinet for a specific purpose such as EDC ratification is an outside possibility.
2. Difficulty in forming any coalition will intensify pressure for new National Assembly elections, but
 - a. Most deputies agree that elections under the present system would not change the present composition of the Assembly.
 - b. Attempt to revise present electoral system would produce serious opposition in National Assembly

SECRET

SECRET

and possibly a complete stalemate.

3. Threat of dictatorship. As a result of public disgust with impotence exhibited by assembly, the possibility of a coup now gets serious discussion, where as previously it was dismissed as idle rumor.
- D. Indications for French Foreign Policy
 1. European integration may be determining factor in selection of new government.
 2. November foreign policy debate showed:
 - a. Nationalist sentiment in Assembly stronger than expected.
 - b. Laniel dependent on nationalistic deputies.
 - c. Clear-cut decision on EDC not then possible.
 3. Dissatisfaction with present foreign policy growing:

SECRET

SECRET

- a. Search being intensified for alternatives to present EDC proposals.
- b. Third force sentiment reviving.
- 4. Accordingly, in impending talks with USSR, France's desire to avoid German rearmament may weaken solidarity of three Western powers.
- 5. On the other hand, no indications yet that the election crisis is undermining the broad non-communist support the National Assembly gives to NATO.
 - a. Bidault has urged that this policy be strengthened, and he still commands support of Popular Republicans who are essential to any coalition.
 - b. Both Socialists and ex-Gaullists favor a strong Western defense plan but want it to include more

SECRET

SECRET

Approved For Release 2000/08/30 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000200070004-0

than the six EDC powers.

- c. The French still view recent Soviet protestations of friendship with scepticism. Both press and government have been quick to recall contrary instances of Soviet attitude toward France.

Approved For Release 2000/08/30 : CIA-RDP80R01443R000200070004-0

SECRET